



# Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools

November 2010

An e-newsletter from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Community Learning and Partnerships Team  
to promote family-school-community partnerships for children's learning

\*\*\*\*\*

*Welcome* to the first edition of the Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools (or WISE Brief), a monthly newsletter of news, events, research, and promising practices to keep your school, district, or organization focused and moving forward on family-school-community partnerships for children's learning. You are receiving this e-brief because of your involvement in a partnership-related event or initiative sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). If you prefer NOT to receive this online newsletter, please respond to this email with the subject line: "Remove from list."

*Your* comments, ideas, and stories are vital to this newsletter. Please tell us your achievements in promoting children's learning with families and community members, as well as your challenges and questions. Partnership practitioners learn most from each other, so *let's hear from you!*

.....

## News You Can Use

**Parent-Teacher Conference Resources** for families, including bilingual families, and teachers are available on the DPI Family-School-Community Partnership website at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/fscphome.html>. This collection of selected, research-based resources explains the importance of parent-teacher conferences and how parents and teachers can focus on improving children's learning.

.....

## Partnership Question of the Month

### How Can the Partnership Action Team Help Children Do Better in School?

Action Teams that focus in a concentrated way on studying what works, listening to and incorporating families' suggestions, and connecting partnership efforts to the school curriculum can improve student academic performance. Read more at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/act-tm-q3.html>

From the Partnership Action Team Toolkit: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/action-team.html>

.....

## Positive Partnership Practices

These ideas come from the Wisconsin DPI VISTA volunteers in schools, community sites, and public libraries around the state working to strengthen family-school-community partnerships. For more great VISTA ideas, visit: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/fscp/vnwsltrhm.html>

- ❖ **Start a *Beyond the Bake Sale Book Group*** of parents and staff to engage in conversation around family involvement and how to make partnerships happen! *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, by Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, and others, is very readable, chock full of practical partnership *ideas*, and includes an excellent discussion guide.  
<http://www.nebraskapirc.org/resources/dyn/files/134369/fn/Beyond+the+Bake+Sale.pdf>
- ❖ **Help parents teach children successful financial habits.** Boost attendance at your next PTA meeting by planning a special event. Show and discuss *Money Moments for Parents*, nine short videos that connect parents to the financial skills, knowledge and ideas being taught in schools: <http://www.ecb.org/finance/parents/>
- ❖ **Make sure parents unable to attend parent-teacher conferences don't miss out!** If parents couldn't come, put together packets of information to send home with students that include a note from teachers summarizing their child's progress and inviting parents to call (include times and phone numbers when teachers can be reached), questions parents can ask teachers about their child's learning, information about testing, and how to use the district online program that allows parents to get information about their child's schedule, grades, attendance, and missing assignments.

## Research for Results

A monthly focus on a timely topic of partnership research.

### Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? How Much Is Best?

The homework question is best answered by comparing students assigned homework with students assigned no homework who are similar in other ways. The results of such studies suggest that homework can improve students' scores on the class tests that come at the end of a topic. Students assigned homework in second grade did better on the math tests; third and fourth graders did better on English skills and vocabulary tests; fifth graders on social studies tests; ninth through 12th graders on American history tests; and 12th graders on Shakespeare tests. Across five studies, the average student who did homework had a higher unit test score than the students not doing homework.

However, some studies suggest little or no relationship between homework and achievement for elementary school students. Why might that be? Younger children have less developed study habits and are less able to tune out distractions at home.

### How much homework?

The National Parent Teacher Association and the National Education Association have a parents' guide called *Helping Your Child Get the Most Out of Homework*. It states, "Most educators agree that for children in grades K-2, homework is more effective when it does not exceed 10-20 minutes each day; older children, in grades 3-6, can handle 30-60 minutes a day; in junior and senior high, the amount of homework will vary by subject." Many school district policies state that high school students should expect about 30 minutes of homework for each academic course they take (a bit more for honors or advanced placement courses). Homework for junior high students appears to reach the point of diminishing returns after about 90 minutes a night. For high school students, the positive line continues to climb until between 90 minutes and 2.5 hours of homework a night, after which returns diminish (Cooper, 1989; Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006).

See the complete August 2008 newsletter article from SEDL at <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedl-letter/v20n02/homework.html>

## *NNPS Update*

### News from the National Network of Partnership Schools

**Web Conference on Successful Partnerships for District Leaders** will be offered on Dec. 8 by the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). Learn strategies that will improve district-level leadership on partnerships and implement school Action Teams for Partnerships. Attendees review, discuss, and apply the NNPS tool [Lead and Succeed: A District Inventory of Leadership and Facilitation Strategies](#). Learn more at [http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/Professional\\_Development/NNPS\\_RFT.htm#WC](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/Professional_Development/NNPS_RFT.htm#WC).

---

## *Funding Opportunities*

**Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation** will make grants in support of children's health and wellness, animals and the environment, and literacy and education. Average grant is \$2,500. Deadline to apply: Dec. 31, 2010.  
<http://eeinwisconsin.org/resource/about.aspx?s=83868.0.0.2209>

**Walmart Store and Sam's Club Giving Programs** support charitable organizations that are important to customers and associates in their own neighborhoods. Through its Walmart Store and Sam's Club Giving Programs, Walmart Stores and Sam's Clubs can recommend grants beginning at \$250 to local charitable organizations. Deadline to apply: Dec. 31, 2010.  
<http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/238.aspx>

**\$500 Do Something Growth Grant** Did you create a sustainable community action project, program or organization that you want to grow? Are you looking for funding to take your already successful project to the next level? We give out a \$500 Do Something Growth Grant every week to help young people. No Deadline: <http://www.dosomething.org/grants/growthgrants>.

Newsletter developed by DPI staff: <b>Ruth Anne Landsverk</b> , Partnerships Coordinator; <b>Jane Grinde</b> , Team Director; <b>Betsy Prueter</b> , Project Coordinator; <b>Kristine Nadolski</b> and <b>Becky Smith</b> , VISTA Leaders; and <b>Laura Paella</b> , Program Assistant.
---